SOCIO-CULTURAL CONCERNS IN THE POETRY OF JAYANTA MAHAPATRA, A.K. RAMANUJAN AND R. PARTHASARATHY

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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I hereby declare that the short synopsis "Socio-Cultural Concerns in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy"being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature under Department of English,FMeH of Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies, Faridabad during the academic year 2019-20.

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ABSTRACT

Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy have traced their footprints in the domain of Indo-Anglian literature. The three poets belong to the postcolonial era. The very essence of expressing Indian way of life has been fantastically depicted in their works. The three poets have common as well as distinguished viewpoints in exploring their experiences, emotions, identity, and sensibilities which mark their poetry as highly commendable. Amalgamation of various themes in the poetry portrays their fascination towards Indian roots, mythology, cultural and traditional values. Their staunch affinities towards authenticity in portrayal of harsh realities of life distinguish them from other contemporaries of the modern era. However, one can trace the fact that being typical Indians, their poetry reflects some sort of belongingness in social and cultural context. In exploring the social realities and inner conflicts of life, different themes and techniques have been employed by each poet separately. Inculcation of Indian sensibility and deep roots in Indian soil symbolizes the affinity of the three poets to pen down the experiences through the medium of poetry. Most of their poems revolve round the theme of self-identity, alienation and social realities in particular. It also deals with being influenced by modernismand how three of the poets have acquired new dimensions in Indian English poetry.

The purpose of this research is to study socio-cultural concerns in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy.

Keywords: Alienation, identity, mythology, conflicts, Indian sensibility, traditional

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1. INTRODUCTION

To mirror Indian English literature, Indian poetry in English is considered to be an archaic form of literature. The trend of Indianizing English in order to showcase Indian sensibilities in social and cultural context has extended so far and Indian English poets have succeeded in depicting varying typical situations prevalent in the chaotic world.

With the introduction of colonialism, a new language, English, proved a powerful weapon for Indian English poets. They got a medium of expression to help in purging out various social and cultural problems faced by the Indian society. To establish Indian identity, colonialism proved a vigorous effort in exploring various themes and techniques for the budding writers.

The Indian English poetry is said to be categorized into three phases: the imitative, the assimilative and the experimental. In three different phases, the writers toiled very hard in depicting various themes related to alienation, conflicts, self -identity, confinements, self - exploration. Increasing trends and techniques in the era of postmodernism, Indian English poetry has paved a unique way to flourish in its various provinces. Prolific writers as Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Keki.N. Daruwalla - marked their ability through the medium of expression and psyche and acquired new dimensions in Indian English poetry.

Indian English poetry is amalgamation of African, British, American and Australian English. The very basis of Indian English poetry enfolds verse romances, melody and lyrics.

The Indian English poetry matured in the mid-19th century in which imitation of western poets like Eliot, Keats was at its peak. Most of the famous writers hailed from Bengal and were highly educated. Variety of themes were employed in both Pre-independence and post-independence poetry. Poets had a staunch affinity for culture, tradition, motherland, environment etc. Later the poetry began with the realization of individual identity considered as one of the salient features of Indian English poetry. In post -independence poetry an expression of individual sensibility ushered in and poets were deeply affected and stimulated by loss of identity that provoked them to a very large extent.

Jayanta Mahapatra, an Indo Anglian modern poet established a remarkable footprint in the poetic world. His staunch affinity towards authenticity in portrayal of harsh realities of life distinguishes him from other contemporaries of the modern era. Synchronization of an external world of freedom with the internal world of the past is one of the features of his poetry. He tries to explore the hidden self through the poetic process. As a prophet, he embraces the harsh realities of life and imperfections by escaping from the artificial world and creates a scope for a new world of liberation and self-discovery.

Increasing trends and techniques in the era of postmodernism and post colonialism, Indian English poetry has paved a unique way to English language to flourish in its various regions. Born on 22nd October 1928 in Cuttack, Jayanta Mahapatra has grounds in Indian culture that portrays Indian sensibility highlighting the various themes such as Hunger, poverty, alienation, exploitation etc. Later on, he creates his own beaker of space where he could fill his perceptions, emotions, hidden poetic expressions to a large extent. Based on various themes, his first volume of poems *Close the sky, Ten by Ten* (1971) contains forty- nine poems, making him a commendable and nationwide poet. His poetic works include:

Shadow Space (1997)

Relationship (1980)

Swayamvara (1971)

A Rain of Rites (1976)

The Socio- cultural concerns in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, AK Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy depicts amalgamation of culture, tradition and customs. The very essence of Indian life is rooted in the grounds of Indian society and being uprooted from Indian sensibility results in loss of identity. In her book, *Representations of a culture in Indian English Poetry*, Mita Biswas writes that, "Multiculturalism is the most durable feature of the Indian way of life." The three of the poets hardly differ in exhibiting the social realities of life.

Jayanta Mahapatra shared a common bond with A.K. Ramanujan as one can find both constructs common themes in their poetry. Most of the themes revolve around culture, myths, Indian people and their traditions. While depicting social and cultural ethos, Jayanta Mahapatra does not suffice the artistic feature imbibed within him. Although he is more conscious of survival of human beings rather than presenting an artificial world for the people, in his poetry most of the characters are prostitutes, slum children, women sufferers, cobbler etc. Deeply affected by the crisis in Orissa, he succeeded in exploring the harsh experiences of its people and is more concerned about Hindu religion including all beliefs and rituals.

Post- independence Indian English poetry is just an extension or continuation of pre-independence poetry. After independence some poets became more conscious of their own identity. Jayanta Mahapatra contemporary of A.K Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy acquired new dimensions in Indo- Anglican poetry that underwent deep in roots. In "Homecoming" R. Parthasarathy asks the Indian poets:

How long can foreign poets
Provide the staple of your lines?
Turn inward, scrape the bottom of your
Past.
(- Rough passage)

In the domain of diaspora tradition and sensibility of A.K. Ramanujan left an indelible imprint in Indian English poetry. Being alienated from the Indian roots, his poems reflect loss of identity and alienation. From a physical and mental viewpoint, Ramanujan was alienated from Indian society, religion, culture and family. As a consequence, most of his poetry also deals with the quest for self or he lagged behind in exploring various issues of India. He had a staunch affinity for his mother and motherland which forced him to go beyond the inner self. Likewise, experience is the weapon for Jayanta Mahapatra in exploring the quest for self. Ramanujan has used memories to pen down about culture, religion and family members. Most of the themes are concerned with familial relationships, personal and social relations and his confinement towards culture, myths, tradition and history. He wrote whatever

recollected in the past in his poems and tried to bridge a gap between past and the present. His works of recognition include:

The Collected Poems of A.K. Ramanujan (1995)

Folktales from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from India (1997)

Second Sight (1986)

Being a sensitive poet, he exemplifies the amalgamation of traditional and modern which marks a unique feature of poetic self. He exhibits a complete understanding of Indian mythology, religion and folklore with the help of imagination.

Rajagopal Parthasarathy, a remarkable poet of postcolonial era is no more an exception in Indian English poetry. Alienation and rootlessness are common aspects in poetry of A.K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra and R. Parthasarathy. Although R. Parthasarathy does not write too much, whatever he composes are commendable and notable. He faces cultural dilemma, rootlessness and loss of identity too. His major works include:

Poetry from Leeds (1968)

Rough Passage (1977)

It is quite natural to compare the psyche of the three poets. On the basis of various themes, they succeed in exploring harsh realities of life.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To explore cultural aspects in poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy, the following literature review was undertaken.

Jayanta Mahapatra, Singing *of Trampled Grass* (2017)

The poet is reminded of the harsh disturbances of his childhood which makes him pen down his silence. Self- discovery plays a vital role in his poems leading to the door of freedom. He mentions alienation, silence, confinements, neglection and insecurity as his companions that compels him to define other world of self and freedom through poetic expression. A sense of insecurity overpowered Mahapatra's childhood that insists him to reveal another world of self-discovery.

K.R. Vijaya, *Jayanta Mahapatra Poetry as Social Commentary: A Study of Selected Poems* (2016)

Dr. Vijaya explores socio-cultural diversity in Jayanta Mahapatra's poem. He comments on the social behaviour of the people especially depicting the people of Orissa and their Hinduism. He throws light on common characters such as prostitutes, cobbler, and a woman in pain. He also discovers. Mahapatra desires human psyche to be explored.

Nasir Khan Malik, *"Indian English Poetry: A Review"* (2015)

The writer describes different phases of Indian English poetry. He explores the different poets of pre-independence and post- independence poetry. The critical analysis also reviews growth of Indian English poetry. It also gives introduction of the post-independent poets such Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan, K.N Daruwalla and their major works.

Anisur Rahman & Dr. Shuby Abidi, "Diasporic Sensibility of A.K. Ramanujan" tells a detailed introduction about A.K. Ramanujan: his life experiences, affinity with mother and motherland and how he is deeply rooted in Indian culture. Basically, highlighting the theme of Alienation, explores loss of identity. It figures out some major works of A.K. Ramanujan and detailed description of his poems.

Asian Poets Conference, Tokyo, (1984)

A comparative study has been made among the three poets laying emphasis on the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra. An analysis of his early life and education, literary works, interview, awards and translations into English has been done in the various papers of the conference. These papers were read and reviewed.

Goutam Karmakar "Divided in the Root and Dilemma: Re-reading Rajagopal Parthasarathy in Postcolonial Era"(2015)

The study highlights the background of R. Parthasarathy, cultural dilemma and quest for roots and identity. Various poems are explored like Rough Passage. It also throws light on contribution of Parthasarathy in Indian English poetry. Impact of western culture on his Tamil essence urges him to forge his inner self and past.

Rajesh Kumar, ***History, Memory and Myth: A study of Diasporic Constructions in the Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan***(2002)

In "History, Memory and Myth: A Study of Diasporic Constructions in the Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan", Rajesh Kumar analyses the comparative study of the two poets namely Jayanta Mahapatra and A.K. Ramanujan. To some extent this paper intends to explore similarities and dissimilarities of their works. Although Mahapatra shares a special bond with Ramanujan and explore some common themes such as Alienation, relationship with Indian culture and tradition. Throughout their works, a search for self continues with intension of searching true self in midst of dogmatic customs.

Jayanta Mahapatra, Door of papers, Essays & Memoirs (2007)

Door of papers, Essays & Memoirs by Jayanta Mahapatra published in 2007, attempts to explore human psyche and to reflect a new hope for freedom and self- introspection. Poetry has supernatural power and ability to liberate the psyche of the poet as well as reader. To reach the climax of self -identity, a good poetry travels through unknown to known. However, Mahapatra succeeds in reflecting social realities, quest for self by employing various themes and techniques.

3. DESCRIPTION OF BROAD AREA

The research will interpret and analyse the social and cultural aspects in poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy. However, there are similarities and differences in psyche of the three poets but they also exhibit some common themes such as Alienation, cultural displacement, quest for self; emphasizing tradition, culture and myths. As postcolonial era gave poets a new expression of writing their emotions and feelings and as a consequence, they have explored social realities, affinity for Indian roots and culture in a very enchanting and lively manner. By opting poetry as a medium of expression three of the poets have explored variety of themes relating to the social and cultural aspects. There is no doubt that one can find similarities in depicting various themes but a slight difference can be felt in psyche of three poets.

Jayanta Mahapatra explores the concept of freedom and self-discovery through the medium of poetry by amalgamating various themes. He has grounds in Indian culture that portrays Indian sensibility highlighting various themes such as hunger, poverty, alienation and exploitation. His sense of commitment towards revealing the facts and inner urges has to be explained. This study will reveal an expression of internal world to deal with real life situations and explore How challenges have been made in front of the three poets.

However, while comparing the poems of R. Parthasarathy with bold poems of A.K. Ramanujan,one can discover the difference in psyche and temperament of both the poets. Indian sensibilities drawn from Indian culture has been depicted in the poem of the three poets.

Jayanta Mahapatra talks of Orrisa and its people and his poems reveal how he is deeply rooted in Indian culture. Poetry of Ramanujan incorporates a different type of quest: the quest for tradition and self. The very concept of home was important for Ramanujan. It gives glimpses of past and present. He discusses alienation with culture as well as family.

Search for identity is the main crust in harmony with modern culture. The concept of two different lives, the one within and without, is explored. Amalgamation of native land and foreign land or in other words mixture of Indian and American culture discovers an element of emotional and psychological background.

R. Parthasarathy who mirrors a new dimension in exploring identity. Through the poem 'Rough Passage' which is further divided into three parts: *Exile*, *Trial* and *Homecoming* – the poet correlates two different culture: fusion of England and Tamil culture.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore socio-cultural aspects in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy

2. To compare the literary works of these three poets from the aesthetic point of view

3. To analyse the concept of self-identity in respect to their culture and societal orientation.

4. To explore how the three poets differ in terms of Indian sensibility, based on their personal life experiences

5. METHODOLOGY TO BE ADOPTED

The current research undertaken is a qualitative research. It is an exploratory research from the viewpoint of objectives. Primary and Secondary sources, including books, journals, and internet resources will be employed from the viewpoint of reading and analysis. On the basis of observations, and the critical interpretations of the works of the three poets, current research goals shall be fulfilled.

1. From the point of view of research objective, the research comprises detailed study of socio-cultural aspects in poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy as primary reading. Further, the poems will be studied and analysed in depth.

2. Sociological books depicting the post- colonial poets and history of socio-cultural background will be studied for better comprehension and understanding of the poems. From autobiographical point of view, the three poets wrote from their past memories and personal experiences. So, it is quite necessary to explore biographical material for the study.

3. Research will be expanded for the comparative analysis among the three poets. For this purpose critical study of text, biographical study of each poet, social and cultural milieu of their times, and various textual interpretations of their poems will be done in a comparative manner.

6. EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE RESEARCH

An expected outcome of this research is to critically analyze the poetry of the three poets from social and cultural point of view and establishment of similarities and dissimilarities in the poetry of the three poets.

Various aspects of aesthetics are expected to be discovered in the poetry of the three poets.

Identification of Indian sensibility in the poems of the three poets is another expected outcome of the study.

Establishment of various themes such as loss of identity, quest for self, cultural displacement is considered to be an expected outcome

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1. INTRODUCTION

To mirror Indian English literature, Indian poetry in English is considered to be an archaic form of literature. The trend of Indianizing English in order to showcase Indian sensibilities in social and cultural context has extended so far and Indian English poets have succeeded in depicting varying typical situations prevalent in the chaotic world.

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